



State Superintendent  
Elizabeth Burmaster

## A Message from the State Superintendent

When I was elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction three years ago, I made a pledge to the citizens of Wisconsin, which has become the mission of the Department of Public Instruction.

The New Wisconsin Promise is our pledge to focus our work on leadership, advocacy, and accountability. We have made this pledge to ensure the opportunity of a quality education for every child, including children with disabilities. Together we must unite as a community around our shared value and responsibility to put our children and their education first.

One of the ways for us to accomplish our New Wisconsin Promise to students with disabilities and their parents is through the State Improvement Plan (SIP) for Children with Disabilities. The SIP is Wisconsin's vehicle for planning and providing statewide direction and leadership in the education of children with disabilities. The overall vision for our five-year State Improvement Plan centers on four goals: students in society, support for learning, quality staff, and collaborative partnerships.



# STATE Improvement Plan *For Children with Disabilities*

## Visions for Success



The State Improvement Plan (SIP) represents the shared vision of how to improve educational results for children with disabilities in Wisconsin. The SIP functions within the broader context of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's (DPI) mission of the "New Wisconsin Promise." The SIP is a five-year plan designed to support Wisconsin's existing state education reform efforts as well as federal legislation included in the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2002 and the reauthorizing of IDEA 1997. The intent is to enhance cross-program linkages, improve planning and service delivery, and encourage the integration of program services to increase student achievement. The SIP is our state vehicle for planning and

providing statewide direction and leadership in the education of children with disabilities. At the department level, the work on the Special Education Team is aligned with the SIP, as are the Special Education Plans (SEP) at the local district level. Our state goal is to prepare students with disabilities for postsecondary education, satisfying employment, and a level of independent living uniquely appropriate for each individual.

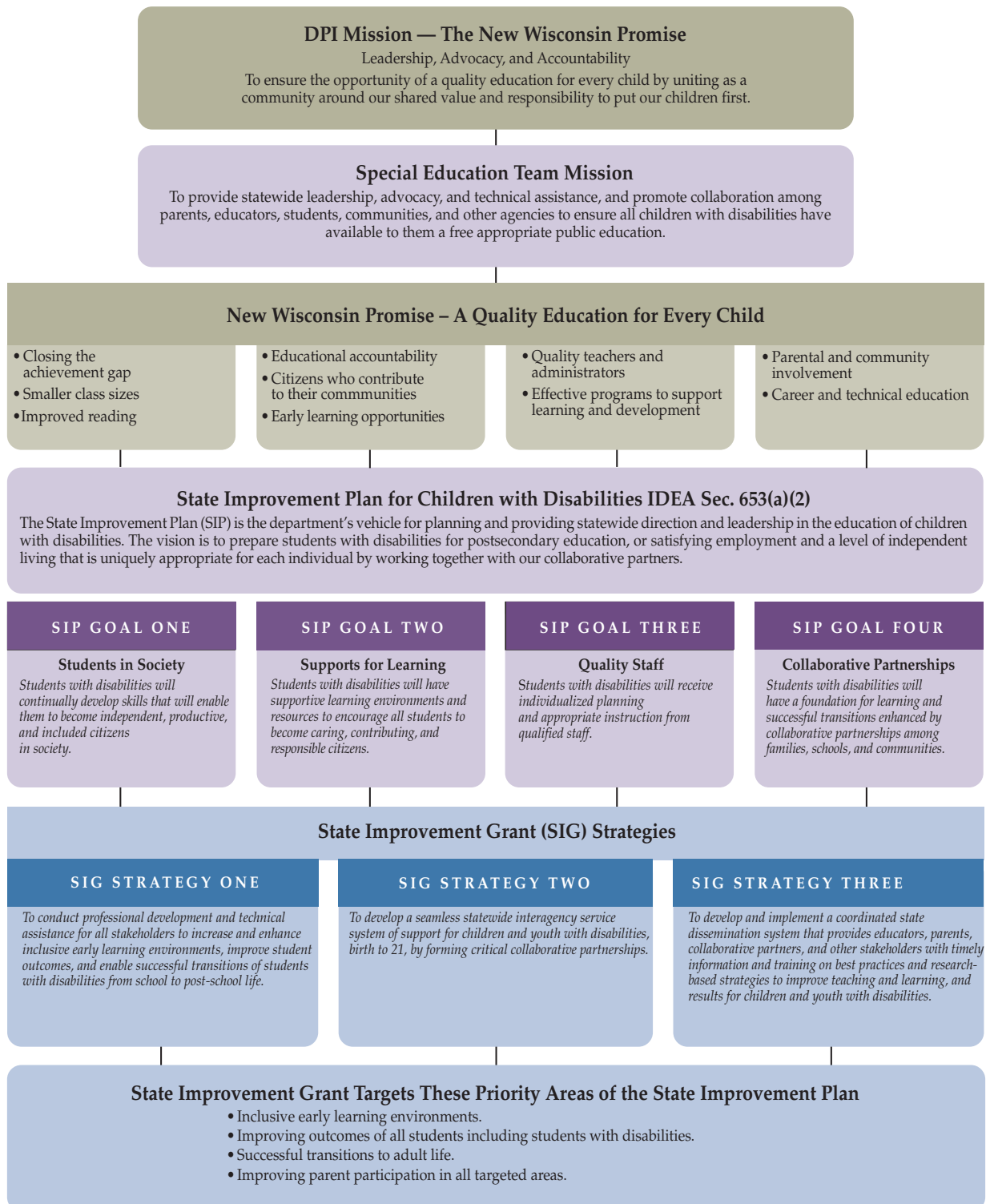
Each year in the SIP Executive Summary, the DPI presents you with statistics, as well as articles and stories, that put them in the context of the previous year's events and accomplishments. As always, we begin with our recounting the major education "stories" of the past year. The next step is to look through the data and examine our progress; just how are we doing?

With this in mind, we encourage you to help us reflect on the "Executive Summary," and use it as a guide to continue state efforts in implementing the best improvement strategies to increase state and local capacity to improve outcomes for student with disabilities. Our focus continues to be one of high expectations for all students.

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## Mission



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## State Improvement Grant Highlights 2003



The 2002 SIP Executive Summary highlighted our newly awarded five year \$6.5 million State Improvement Grant (SIG). The purpose of the SIG is to assist the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and its partners with reforming and improving state systems' provision of early intervention, education, and transition services to students with disabilities birth to 21 and their families. This includes systems for professional development, technical assistance and dissemination of knowledge about best practices. The SIG continues to be a critical funding mechanism for the SIP and supporting our goals for improved student outcomes for students with disabilities.

In the 2003 grant year the SIG supported the four SIP goals by:

- Supporting agencies and activities that improve transition activities thereby enhancing postsecondary education and employment for students with disabilities, ages 14 and older. Included are supporting the transition coordinators at both the CESA and Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) level as well as the post-school follow-up study.
- Through support of the Early and Ongoing Collaboration and Assistance (EOCA) project which assists all students, including students with disabilities, to successfully meet challenging academic and behavior standards by improving the quality of educational services and collaborations among professionals and parents.
- Supporting improvements in the quality of outcomes for young children with disabilities birth to 5 ensuring young children with disabilities receive special education and related services from well-trained personnel in a rich array of appropriate natural environments.
- Continuing to build a process and structure that enables families, schools, and communities to work together using effective systemic and educational practices that remove barriers and thereby enhance capacity and result in improved outcomes of all students, particularly students with disabilities birth to 21.

To see the 2003 SIG accomplishments in more detail, please access the SIG homepage at: [www.wisconsininsig.org](http://www.wisconsininsig.org).

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## Wisconsin's Continuous Improvement and Focused Monitoring System (CIFMS)

In 2000, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) began to focus its monitoring efforts on those requirements most closely related to improving results for children with disabilities and those states most in need of support to improve compliance and performance. Beginning in 2003, Wisconsin began developing a Continuous Improvement and Focused Monitoring System (CIFMS) that incorporates the most effective elements of continuous improvement and focused monitoring as described by OSEP. The purpose of this new system is to achieve positive results for children with disabilities in Wisconsin while ensuring continued procedural compliance with state and federal laws and regulations.

Beginning with the 2005-06 school year and beyond, local education agencies (LEAs) will be selected for focused monitoring onsite visits based on critical federal performance

indicators that include graduation rates, dropout rates, education environment (assess the extent children with disabilities are educated with their non-disabled peers), participation and performance in statewide assessments, and disproportionality.

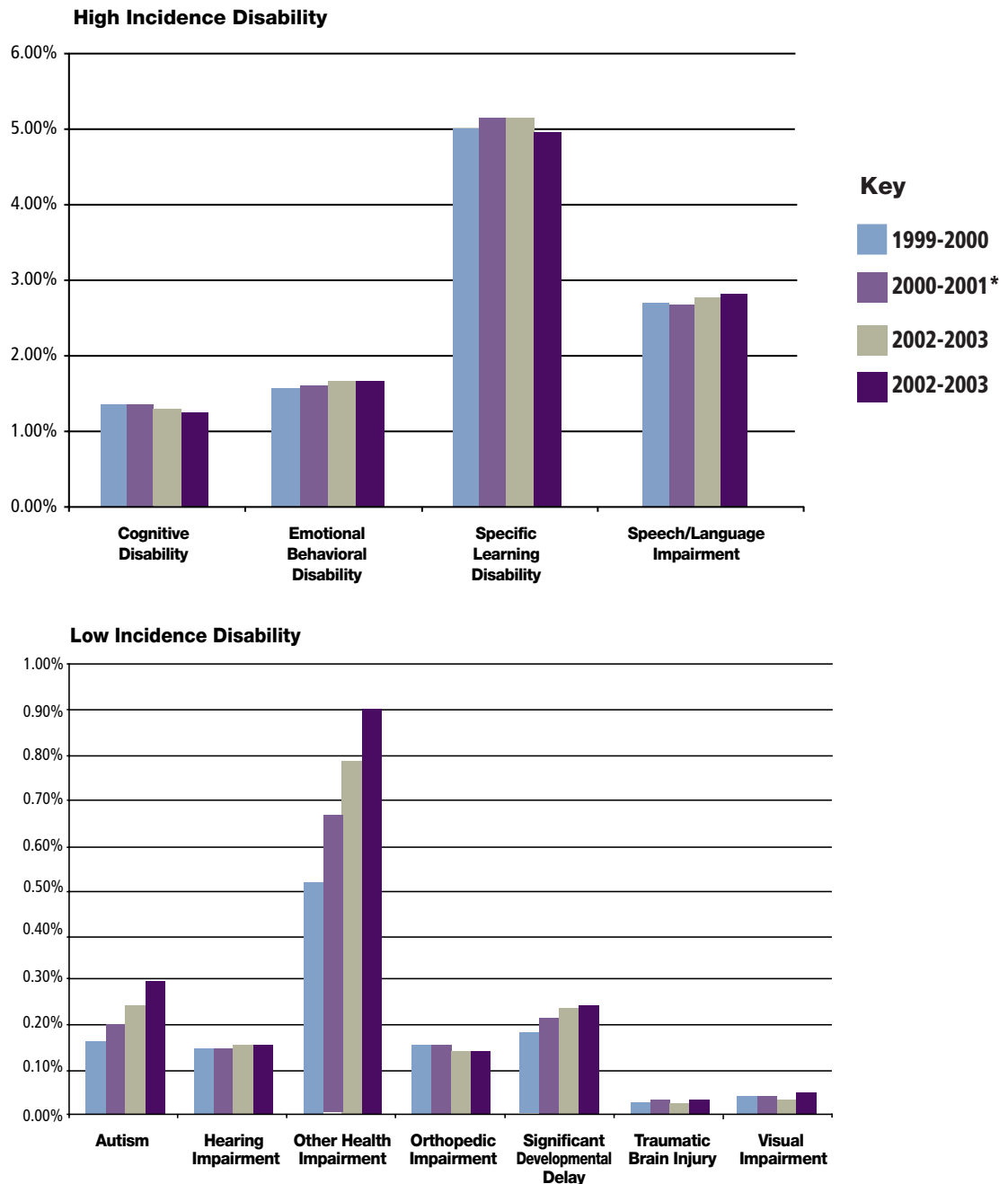
As we embarked on this new system, DPI continued to involve stakeholders in the development of the CIFMS. Original selection of task force members represented the categories of stakeholder characteristics outlined by the CIFMS manual from OSEP. An Ad Hoc Task Force planning session was held on November 6, 2003. The task force continues to meet and help provide direction and support for our "new" monitoring system. DPI is also planning to provide materials and training in self-assessment in preparation for LEA CIFMS visits, as well as coordinate data retreats for LEA participation. More information will be forthcoming in the months ahead.

## Prevalence of Disabilities

Prevalence represents the percentage of the district-enrolled children identified with a particular disability. Prevalence is determined by dividing the number of students identified by primary disability by the total public/non-public enrollment for the district.

The overall prevalence rate of students with disabilities, as reported on the December 1, 2002, Child Count, was 12.4%. The prevalence rate has remained relatively consistent over the last two years which may indicate that overall prevalence rates are

beginning to stabilize. Of particular interest is the continued decline in prevalence of Specific Learning Disabilities. Districts are continuing to promote and expand the process of regular and special education teachers and parents working together in teams to assist students at risk of failure who might otherwise have been referred for special education. Increases in the prevalence of Autism, Significant Developmental Delay, and Other Health Impairment continue and may indicate continued progress in identifying younger children with disabilities and providing services to meet their needs sooner.



*\*In this school year, the DPI started counting students from the Department of Corrections and the Department of Health and Family Services.*



## Goal 1:

# Students in Society

*Students with disabilities will continually develop skills that will enable them to become independent, productive, and included citizens in society.*

### Objectives

- 1.1 The percentage of students with disabilities who participate in the general education curriculum and statewide standardized assessments will increase.
- 1.2 The percentage of students with disabilities who score at the proficient or advanced performance level on standardized statewide assessments will increase.
- 1.3 The quality of education will improve so all students will meet high standards for academic performance and personal behavior, thus reducing referral rates for special education.
- 1.4 The percentage of students with disabilities who exit high school with a diploma will increase.
- 1.5 The percentage of students with disabilities who are employed or participating in postsecondary education three years after leaving high school will increase.
- 1.6 The percentage of students with disabilities who are living independently or in assisted living arrangements three years after leaving high school will increase.

## Students with Disabilities and Statewide Assessment

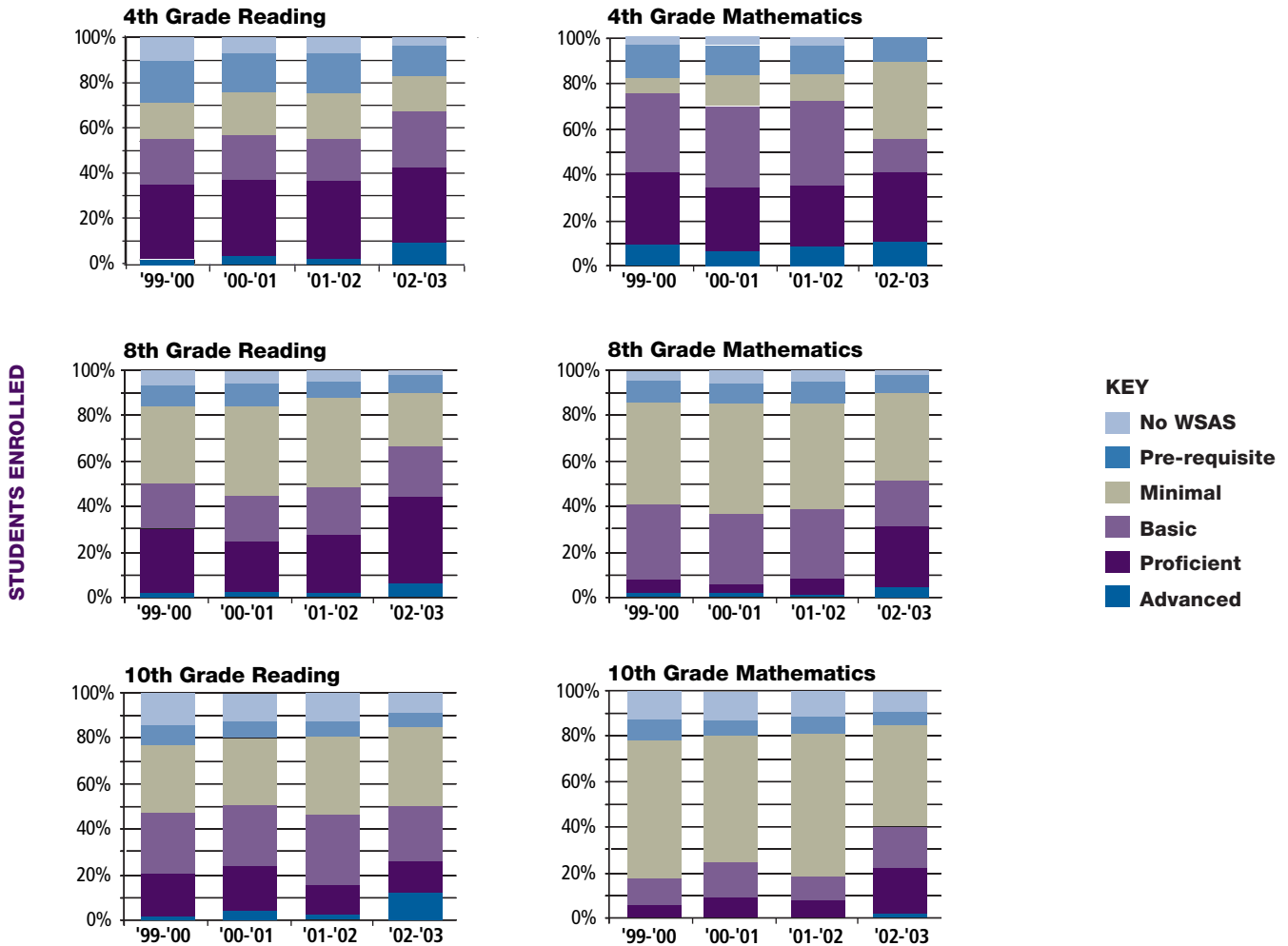
All students with disabilities are required to participate in state and district assessments. In 1997, the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) required that "children with disabilities are included in general state and district-wide assessment programs with accommodations, where necessary." In 2002, the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) further required states to implement statewide accountability systems requiring all students, including students with disabilities, to be proficient in math and reading by 2013-14. This act also requires LEAs to measure and report on the progress of all students and subgroups of students including race/ethnicity, children with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, and limited English proficient. Following her election in 2001, State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster focused the work of DPI around the New Wisconsin Promise (NWP) and a pledge to put our children and their education first. Included in the NWP are goals specific to student achievement, educational accountability, improved reading, and post-school success in becoming actively involved citizens. With these requirements and goals in mind, just how are students with disabilities performing on statewide assessments, graduation rates, and post-school follow-up?

### Academic Progress:

Using the data collected from 2002 and 2003 Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam (WKCE), the graphs on the following page indicate the performance levels of students with disabilities. In addition to achievement scores, the data also indicates the percent of students with disabilities who did not participate. To get a broad picture of how students with disabilities compare in achievement to their non-disabled peers, please access the Wisconsin's Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS) website at <http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/data/selschool.asp>. This data indicates growth in not only the numbers of students with disabilities taking the WKCE, but also an increase in the percent of students with disabilities scoring at the proficient and advanced levels.

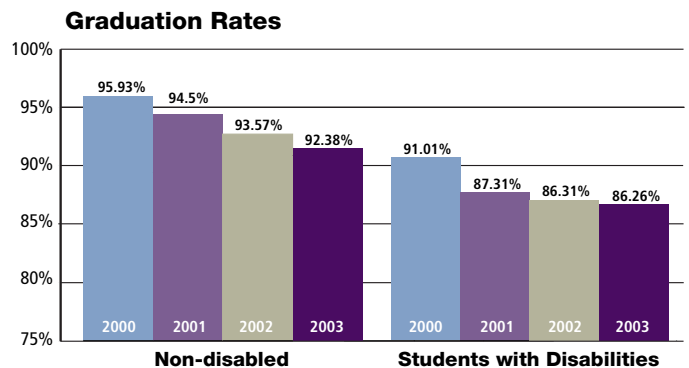
Because some students' performance cannot be measured meaningfully using the WKCE, Wisconsin offers an alternative assessment, the Wisconsin Alternate Assessment (WAA). For more information about the WAA, please access the Special Education website at <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlse/een/assmt-waa.html>. While Wisconsin still sees an achievement gap between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers, our progress in closing this gap continues to move in a very positive direction.

## Progress of Students With Disabilities on WKCE Tests from 1999-2000 to 2002-2003



## Graduation Rates

Graduates are students who complete the prescribed course of study established by a local school district and receive a regular diploma. For purposes of this report, General Educational Development (GED) and High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) completers are not counted as graduates or exiters. The graduation rate for students with disabilities is the number of graduates with disabilities divided by the number of graduates with disabilities plus the cohort dropouts with disabilities. As you can see from the graph, a gap still remains between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers. Part of the department's response to this gap can be found in the revision of our special education monitoring system (see page 3) to a continuous improvement system.



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## Post High School Follow-up Study

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is committed to identifying and responding to the needs of students with disabilities. To that end, it is necessary to examine the post high school outcomes of students with disabilities and to use that information to help guide and make programming decisions that will improve education and transition services for students, and ultimately improve post high school outcomes. This study assesses the outcomes of students with disabilities who successfully exited high school by examining their participation in independent living, postsecondary education, and employment one and three years after exiting their high school.

The information on the right (Cohort 1) is a summary of key findings of the statewide post-high school outcomes survey and reflects the areas of a student's post high school life which include areas of postsecondary education, employment, and independent living. For the purpose of this summary, Cohort 1 refers to students with disabilities who exited high school in Wisconsin between December 1999 and December 2000, and participated in the first Post High School Outcomes Survey one year after exiting. Cohort 1(3) refers to this same group of students three years after exiting high school. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the former students who were interviewed year one of this survey were re-interviewed during year three of this survey.

In summary, when looking at the area of independent living one year after high school, students with cognitive disabilities were most likely to continue to live with their parents (82%), but three years after high school, that percentage dropped to percentages similar to other disability areas (29%). In the area of postsecondary education, overall, fifty-two percent (52%) of former students are attending or have attended some type of postsecondary education program three years after exiting high school compared to 47% one year after exiting. This indicates an additional 5% of students sought postsecondary training within three years of graduation. Only 5% of former students began a postsecondary program and then discontinued it. Participation in technical college increased the greatest, from 28% (year one) to 36% (year three). When it comes to employment, young minority adults and those with cognitive disabilities were the least likely groups to be employed, receive a raise, and have benefits through their current employment.

### Summary of Key Outcomes for Cohort 1 and Cohort 3

Below are noted outcomes for three survey years.

The first figure represents year one and the percent in parenthesis represents year three.

21% (63%) of the respondents live independently.

93% (83%) of the respondents report getting together socially more than one time per week.

47% (52%) of the respondents participate in postsecondary education.

23% (28%) of the respondents attend an academic (2-year or 4-year) college.

28% (36%) of the respondents attend technical college.

80% (78%) of the respondents are employed.

80% (77%) of the employed youth work more than 20 hours per week.

64% (53%) of the employed youth work more than 37 hours per week.

57% (47%) of the employed youth earn \$8.00 or more per hour and 41% (20%) earn less than \$8.00.

50% (40%) of the employed youth earn between \$5.75 and \$9.99 per hour.

19% (29%) of the employed youth earn more than \$10.00 per hour.

38% (41%) of the respondents are working and also participating in postsecondary education.

12% (10%) of the respondents are neither employed nor attend postsecondary education.

While the employment rate of white youth with disabilities has declined slightly (2%) over the past three years, there has been a significant decrease (10%) in the percentage of employed minority youth with disabilities. Young adults with emotional behavioral disabilities experienced the greatest increase in employment three years after exiting high school. Youth with orthopedic impairments, traumatic brain injuries, and visual impairments have continued to be the least employed groups for the past three years.

## Goal 2:

# Supports for Learning

*Students with disabilities will have supportive learning environments and resources to encourage all students to become caring, contributing, and responsible citizens.*

### Objectives

2.1 The percentage of preschoolers with disabilities who receive special education and related services in inclusive settings will increase.

2.2 The percentage of students with disabilities who participate in the regular education environment with supplementary aids and services to the maximum extent appropriate as determined by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team will increase.

2.3 The percentage of students with disabilities who drop out of school will decrease.

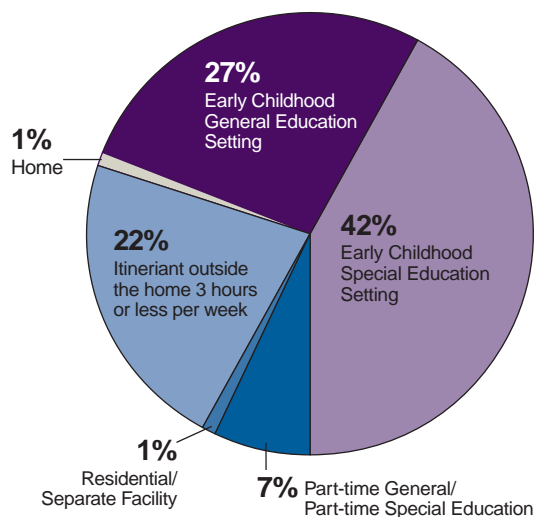
2.4 The number of students with disabilities who are suspended or expelled will decrease.

## Education Environment December 2002

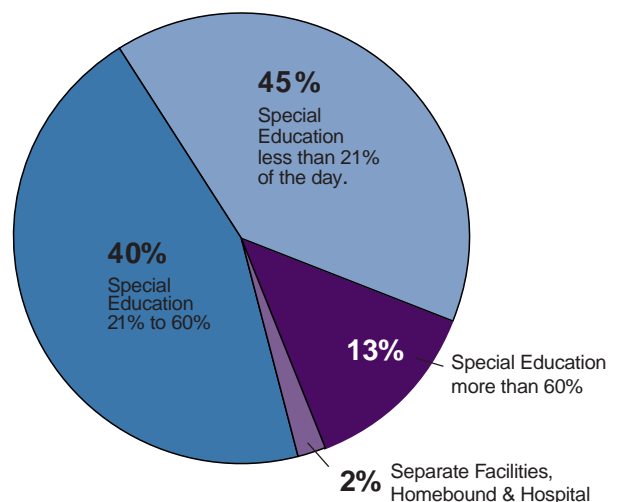
Each year, through the federal student data report commonly known as Child Count, DPI collects data from local educational agencies on the number of students with disabilities served in different educational environments. This data is used to help Wisconsin monitor compliance with the least restrictive environment provisions of IDEA and to inform educators, parents, and others of the extent to which students with disabilities are educated with their non-disabled peers. While a student's education environment refers to the extent to which students with disabilities receive special education and related services in classes or schools with non-disabled peers, it does not reflect the amount of services received.

In reflecting on the 2002-2003 Child Count data at the early childhood level, 27% of children with disabilities are in general education settings leaving 63%, or well over half of children with disabilities ages 3-5, either in early childhood special education settings, part-time in general and part-time in special education settings, or in some other setting. The percentage of students ages 6-21 served outside the regular education classroom less than 21% of the school day did increase 1% over last year's report. The educational environment for this age group continues to remain constant.

**Ages 3-5**



**Ages 6-21**





## Dropout Rates

A dropout is a student who was enrolled in school at some time during the reported school year, was not enrolled at the reporting time the following year, has not graduated from high school or completed a state or district-approved educational program, and does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions: transfer to another public school district, private school, or state- or district-approved educational program; temporary absence due to expulsion, suspension, or school-excused illness; or death. The dropout rate for students with disabilities is determined by dividing the number of students with disabilities, grades 9-12, reported as having dropped out on the School Performance Report by the number of students with disabilities, grades 9-12, attending the district as reported on the December 1 Child Count.

The dropout rate for students with disabilities in Wisconsin seems to be decreasing over the last three years while the rate for students without disabilities increased slightly during 2002-03, but has been decreasing over the past three years as well.

Dropout rates continue to vary by disability category with the highest rate occurring for students with emotional behavioral disabilities and the lowest rate for students with autism. The dropout rate continues to be closely monitored, not only by OSEP, but as an element of the state monitoring process as well. A high expectation for all students includes high expectations for all students to graduate from high school.

The box below indicates the percentage rate of dropouts from 1999-2000 to 2002-2003.

Year	Students with Disabilities	Students without Disabilities
2002-2003	2.24	1.94
2001-2002	2.53	1.85
2000-2001	2.94	2.01
1999-2000	2.66	2.25

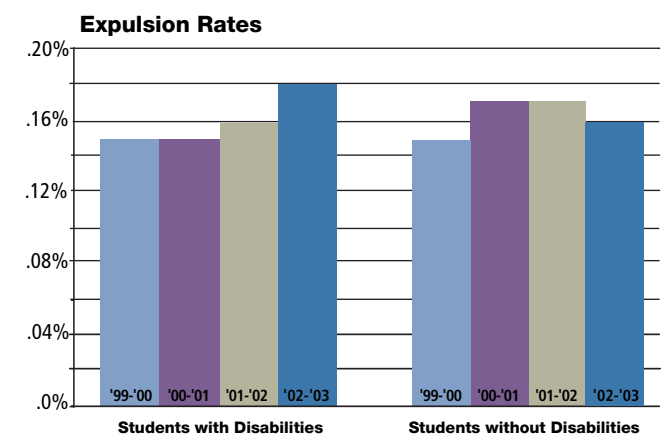
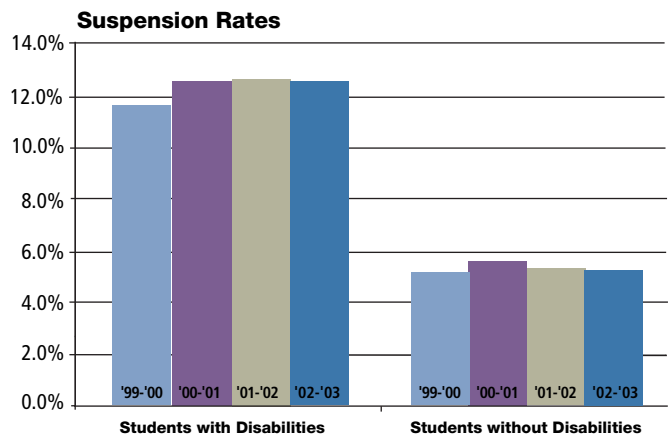
## Suspension and Expulsion Rates

The suspension and expulsion rates for students with disabilities are determined by dividing the number of students with disabilities who were suspended as reported on the School Performance Report by the total number of students with disabilities attending the school district as reported on the December 1 Child Count. The suspension rate for students without disabilities is determined by dividing the number of students without disabilities who were suspended, as reported on the School Performance Report, by the total number of students without disabilities, as reported on the third Friday in September enrollment, expressed as a percentage.

The suspension rate for students with disabilities continues to increase, as does the gap between students with and without disabilities. The percentage of students with disabilities who are suspended continues to be more than twice the rate than for students without disabilities.

For the first time in several years, the expulsion rate for students with disabilities is higher and has risen slightly more than the rate of their non-disabled peers.

One initiative that has had a significant impact on reducing these rates is the EOCA initiative. Pilot schools using the EOCA model saw not only fewer behavior concerns but suspension rates that declined markedly. Please refer to the section on the EOCA initiative.



## Addressing the Learning and Social/Emotional Needs of All Children

### Early and Ongoing Collaboration and Assistance (EOCA) Initiative

In Wisconsin, we have reexamined many of our traditional programs, policies, and procedures. This process is reflected in the New Wisconsin Promise that is our pledge to “ensure the opportunity of a quality education for every child.” By promoting proactive collaborative planning, instruction, and assessment within schools, we will enhance the success of all students and prevent student failure. By helping schools build exciting, and challenging programs that are creative and diverse in the way we teach, we will live up to our promise. EOCA provides the leadership, coordination, and technical assistance designed to help education communities increase the use, variety, and quality of instructional options, professional development, and parent/community involvement.

EOCA began during the 2001-2002 school year as a statewide system directed at promoting proactive collaborative planning, instruction, and assessment within schools aimed at enhancing the success of all students while preventing student failure.

### 2002-2003 Outcomes Reported by Schools Piloting the EOCA Model Include:

**Improved outcomes of student concerns:** Schools utilizing an integrated EOCA team model reported that 72.2% of student concerns had been improved or resolved after interventions.

**Reduced special education referral rate:** One-third of all EOCA schools experienced a decline in special education referral rates of >1%. Referral rates in second-year schools declined from

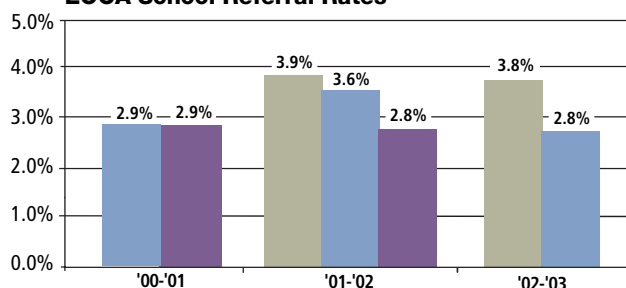
3.6% to 2.8% between 2001-02 and 2002-03. Nearly 80% of referred students in EOCA schools were found eligible for special education as compared to the 2001-02 state average of 64%, indicating improvement in referral-to-placement ratio.

**Fewer behavior concerns:** Suspension rates declined markedly for non-white students since 2000-01. In EOCA schools, the gap between suspension rates for white and non-white students reduced noticeably, decreasing by more than 54%. Suspension rates also declined for white students, but at a slower rate than for non-white students. By the end of 2002-03, non-white student suspension rates were .3% lower than white student rates, although they had been 1% higher than white rates just two years earlier. The number of students with disabilities receiving suspensions in EOCA schools also decreased markedly between 2001-02 and 2002-03.

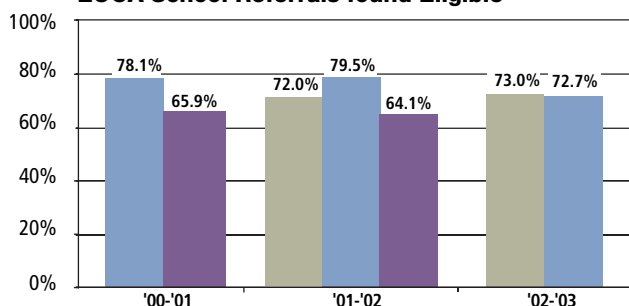
**Improved student achievement:** Even though analysis was limited by changes made in administration dates and scoring of the WKCE, there is evidence of higher student achievement for some student groups in second-year EOCA schools. For example:

- Non-white fourth grade students in EOCA schools outperformed the statewide average by 4% in reading and 7% in math. Fourth graders who are English Language Learners or those students who are in poverty outperformed the state average in all areas, particularly in math where performance exceeded the state average by more than 15%.
- The proportion of fourth graders with disabilities reaching proficient/advanced status surpassed state levels in all areas, most significantly in reading where performance of students with disabilities in EOCA schools exceeded the state average by 24%.
- In two second-year schools with highest numbers of non-white students, students in poverty or students who are English Language Learners, the gap between white students and disaggregated groups was significantly reduced, particularly in the area of reading.

**EOCA School Referral Rates**

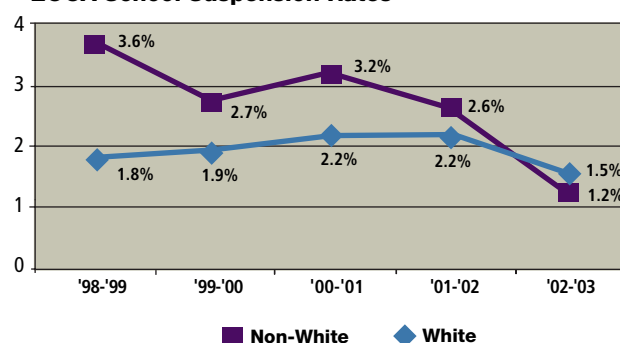


**EOCA School Referrals found Eligible**



■ All EOCA Schools ■ 2nd Year EOCA Schools ■ State Average

**EOCA School Suspension Rates**



■ Non-White ◆ White

### Goal 3:

## Quality Staff

*Students with disabilities will receive individualized planning and appropriate instruction from qualified staff.*

### Objectives

3.1 The number of special education teachers and related service personnel in disability areas of greatest need will increase.

3.2 The knowledge and skills of regular and special education teachers, paraprofessionals, related service providers, and administrators to improve educational results for children with disabilities will increase.

3.3 In cooperation with special education teachers, training for paraprofessionals involved in the provision of services for students with disabilities will increase.

3.4 The number of school district special education staff that participate in Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs) statewide data retreats will increase.

3.5 The knowledge of state special education eligibility criteria and proper application will increase.

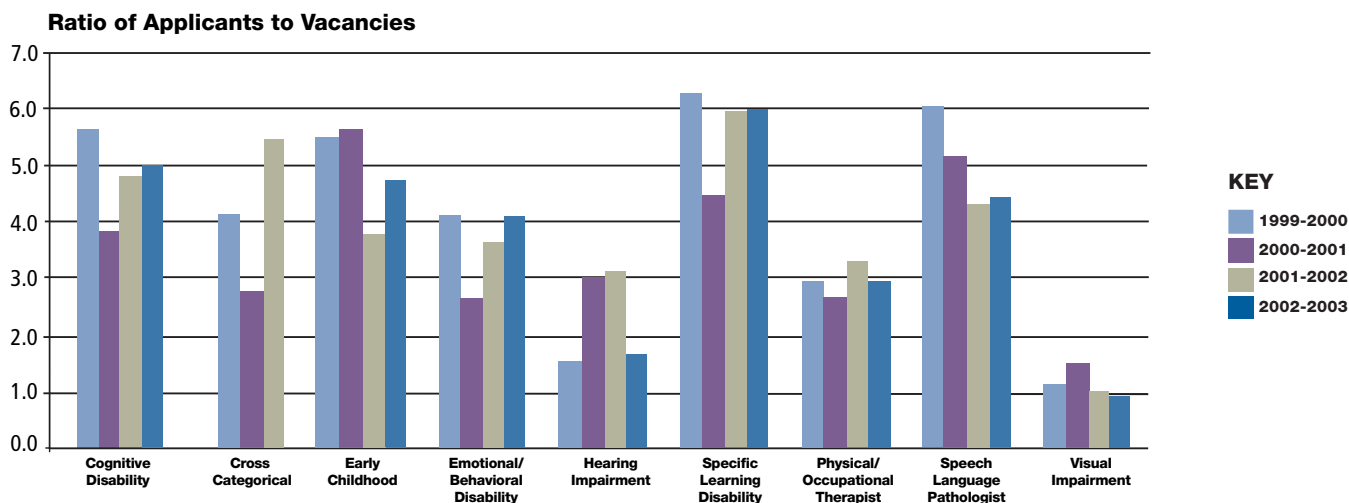
### Shortage of Qualified Staff

While the expectations and training of a qualified educator staff continues to be a priority for Wisconsin, the special education field continues to struggle to meet this goal. A substantial number of special education positions continue to be filled by emergency licenses. In 2003, the department issued a total of 2,798 emergency licenses with special education accounting for 44.7% or 1,252 of these licenses. This was a slight increase from 2002 in which 42% of emergency licenses were issued to special education staff. Two-thirds of the special education emergency licenses in 2003 were issued for positions to teach students with emotional behavioral disorders and specific learning disabilities. The box below indicates the specific area that each of the 1,252 emergency licenses could be found. In a 2003 survey given to school districts, the department asked where districts had critical staff shortages. A total of 296 or 81.8% of the districts that returned the survey responded by placing special education second only to the area of mathematics as the most critical area of shortage.

In looking at the ratio of applicants to vacancies, subject areas with a higher number of applicants per vacancy are more likely to be in oversupply. Areas with fewer applicants per vacancy are more likely to be in undersupply, or short supply. The ratio of applicants to vacancies is calculated by dividing the number of applicants by the number of vacancies. Data presented in the areas that special education continues to be in short supply, or high demand. The areas with the lowest ratios continue to be in the areas of visual impairment and hearing impairment.

#### Number of Emergency Licenses Issued

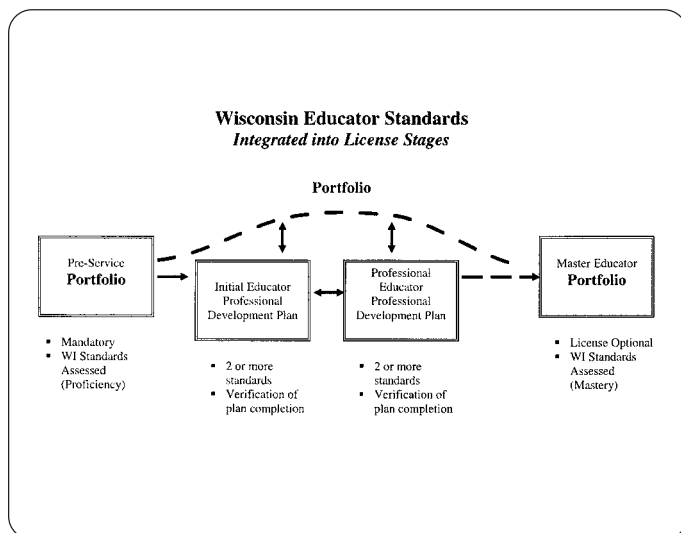
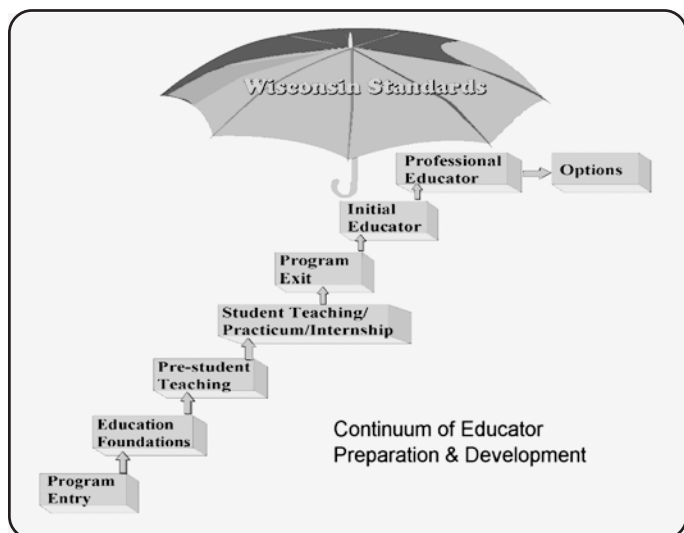
	'99-'00	'00-'01	'01-'02	'02-'03
Hearing Impairment	10	7	3	10
Early Childhood Special Education	51	64	57	71
Cognitive Disability	126	169	159	160
Specific Learning Disability	278	373	418	387
Speech/Language Impairment	39	25	23	20
Visual Impairment	7	0	3	8
Emotional Behavioral Disability	394	430	449	452
Cross Categorical	N.A.	N.A.	69	144
Total	905	1068	1181	1252



## Wisconsin Meets the Goal of Qualified Education Staff

The mission of the DPI is to ensure a quality education for every child. To meet this end, the department continues to provide quality preparation and continuing professional development to excellent early childhood through grade twelve educators. In June of 2000, Chapter PI 4 (Teacher Education Program Approval) was repealed. New program approval standards within Chapter PI 34 took effect July 1, 2000. Chapter PI 3 (Licenses) remains in effect only for students graduating from an approved teacher education program prior to August 31, 2004. The programs for those students endorsed by their institutions of higher education for educational licenses after August 31, 2004, must meet the new license requirements of PI 34.

The new system is based on the Wisconsin Standards with demonstrated knowledge, skills, and dispositions for teaching, pupil services, and administration. Initial licensing is based on an educator's successful performance, as measured against these standards, and includes a continuum of educator preparation and development. For a complete set of rules, resources, and guidance, see the Teacher Education, Professional Development and Licensing Team web page: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dlsis/tel/index.html>.



## Goal 4: Collaborative Partnerships

*Students with disabilities will have a foundation for learning and successful transitions enhanced by collaborative partnerships among families, schools, and communities.*

### Objectives

4.1 Collaboration among parents, regular and special educators, related service providers, and all administrators in areas of school governance and the development of quality Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in a consensus-based manner will increase.

4.2 Collaboration with postsecondary educational institutions and service agencies will increase.

4.3 Collaboration among early intervention, childcare, Head Start, and school early childhood programs will increase system level partnerships.

## Parents and Partnerships

### Special Education District Plan Parent Involvement Data: Preliminary Comparison 2000-01 to 2002-03

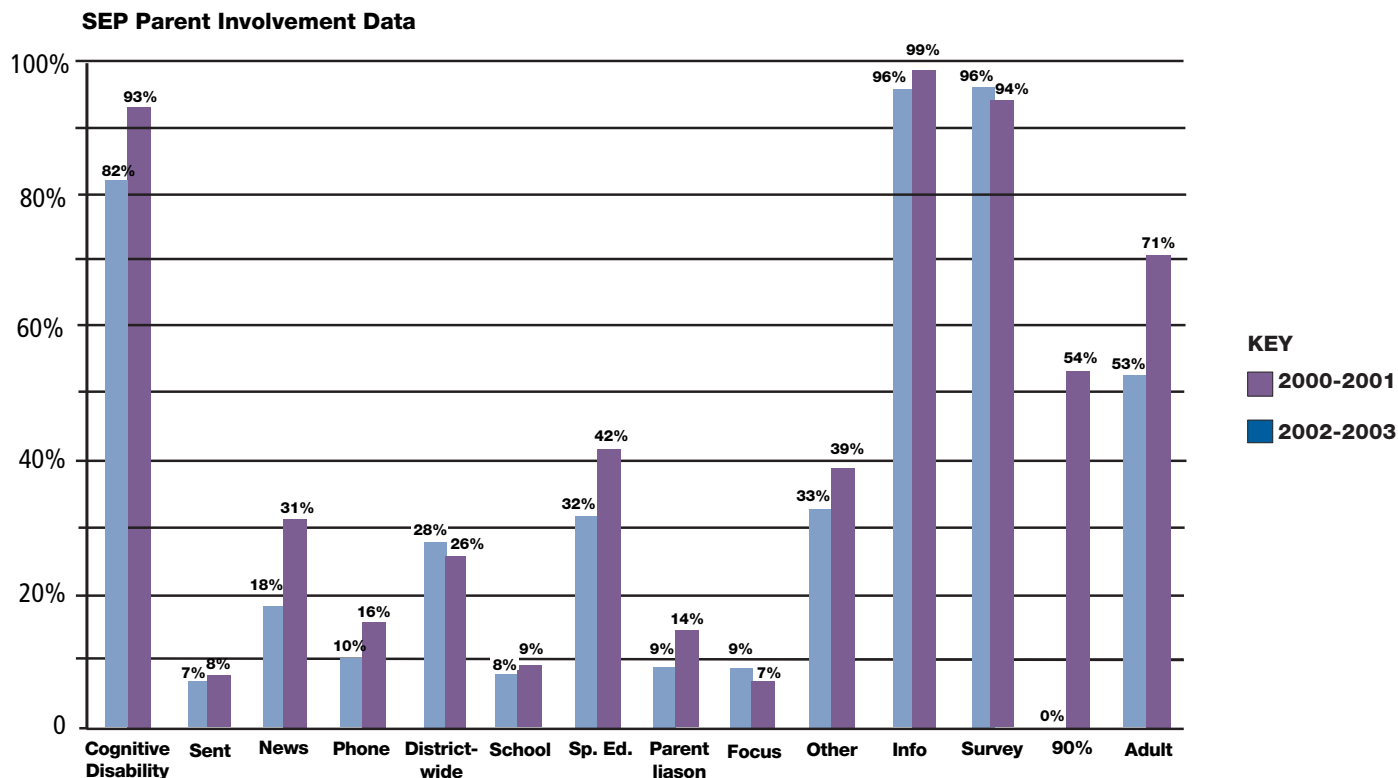
Wisconsin school districts continue to increase their understanding of the need to include parents in the development and review of their district special education plan (SEP) choosing methods consistent with objectives of the Wisconsin Statewide Parent-Educator Initiative. In 2002-03, 92% of the districts reported including parents in the development of the SEP as compared to 82% of districts in 2000-01. In addition, the methods used to include parents have also increased. The methods used to increase parent participation include:

- Mailing the SEP- 30% in 2002-03, up from 18% in 2000-01
- Calling parents about the SEP- 18% in 2002-03, up from 10% in 2000-01
- Participation in an advisory council or group- 41% in 2002-03, up from 32% in 2000-01
- Using a parent liaison- 16% in 2002-03, up from 9% in 2000-01

In addition to including parents and adult pupils in development of special education services, 93% of the districts reported using surveys to find out about satisfaction of the program and services as well. Of the 93% of districts using a parent and adult pupil satisfaction survey, 52% or 170 of the districts voluntarily reported at least a 90% satisfaction rate. Since the DPI does not require districts to report the percentage rate, this 52% represents those who chose to include it and not necessarily all those who had a high satisfaction rate.

It is evident the quality of staff to parent relationships at school is a key factor in student success. The desired outcome objective is that parents participate in the development and review of 100% of the LEAs special education plan. The development of district parent liaisons and district's parent advisory committees has been shown to be an effective way for LEAs to garner parent involvement. Districts that would like to show more progress in this area are encouraged to look for increased coaching through the Wisconsin Statewide Parent-Educator Initiative (WSPEI) and the Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education (FACETS).





## Partnerships and Collaborations: Improving Post-High School Outcomes

### Wisconsin Statewide Transition Initiative

2004-2005 will begin the fifth year of the Wisconsin Statewide Transition Initiative (WSTI) which currently involves 116 transition action teams within schools and 53 County Advisory Councils. In addition to the collaborative work of the action teams and councils, the WSTI website, <http://www.wsti.org>, has added a state and county clearinghouse structure for transition information. The Statewide Clearinghouse contains a list of post-school activities that will assist students, parents, teachers and individuals who are designing coordinated sets of activities for students with disabilities in the following transition post-school areas: postsecondary education, community participation, vocational training, employment, continuing and adult education, independent living, and adult services agencies. The WSTI initiative has also provided data based on over 1,800 IEPs that indicates for the third year of the project

which demonstrated that the "O' Leary/ Storms" checklist can be used as a tool for local district transition planning and change. In addition, the WSTI website has a web-based training module (<http://www.transitioniep.org/>) available free of charge statewide that provides in-depth information regarding transition.

### Connection to Postsecondary Institutions in Improving Post High School Outcomes

Along with the collaboration and partnerships that have been forged through the WSTI initiative, there exists an equally strong collaboration among DPI, WSTI, and the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). Each of these agencies and organizations has made a commitment to remove barriers to postsecondary education for students with disabilities. Regional meetings hosted by the technical college were used to discuss and distribute a new guide titled, "A Wisconsin Post-Secondary

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## ***Partnerships and Collaborations: Improving Post High School Outcomes (cont'd)***

Guide to Disability Documentation.” This guide is a wonderful example of the collaborative efforts on the part of all Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) in Wisconsin and will assist LEAs and IHEs in determining their responsibilities in understanding needed documentation students with disabilities will need when enrolling in postsecondary education.

### **Partnerships with Parents**

One of the best outcomes of both the WSTI initiative and the documentation guide is the continued involvement of parents. The Wisconsin Statewide Parent-Educator Initiative (WSPEI) continues to participate and present post-high school transition information. This past year, WSPEI was able to be a co-presenter at the four regional transition meetings.

### **Transition Summit Workgroup**

The transition summit workgroup was formed in September 2003 with the express purpose of developing interagency collaboration through monthly conference calls and face to face meeting three times a year. This workgroup was formed after individuals representing several agencies and organizations such as the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, CESAs, WTCS, FACETS, and WSTI participated in a National Summit on Transition. New members have been added from the Department of Workforce Development and Independent Living. This group focuses on improving interagency collaboration and identifying needed resources and practices to improve transition services statewide.

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## ***Partnerships Create a Firm Foundation***

Early childhood collaboration continues to expand among early intervention, childcare, Head Start, school kindergarten program, and school early childhood program. Consultants from DPI, the Department of Health and Family Services, the Department of Workforce Development and a wide variety of early childhood associations and regional networks collaborate through the Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners (WECCP) initiative. Early childhood stakeholders were involved in the development of, and continue to play a significant role, in Wisconsin’s State Improvement Grant (SIG).

Collaboration and newly expanded partnerships include:

- The partnership among the early childhood transition and preschool options projects, FACETS, WSPEI, and Birth to 3 began as an effort to develop a PowerPoint and has expanded to include presentations at regional meetings, an upcoming leadership conference, and ongoing plans for technical assistance.
- Collaboration among early childhood special education teacher training programs has focused on mini grants to UW-Milwaukee, UW-Whitewater, and UW-Eau Claire (for collaborative work with UW-River Falls). The first collaborative course is an assessment course between UW-Milwaukee and UW-Stevens Point.

- Collaborations among early childhood special education, child care and Head Start have expanded through participation in WECCP videoconference, cross-department development of Model Early Learning Standards, and various other project activities.
- Collaborations between early childhood special education and kindergarten programming focus on efforts related to the expansion of four-year-old kindergarten. Activities have included braided funding to hire six community collaboration coaches and co-sponsorship of the Preserving Early Childhood (four-year-old kindergarten) conference.
- Efforts to promote the utilization of early childhood program support teachers by CESAs and large districts has made connections with the SIG transition project to learn more about how they have promoted the transition coordinators in each CESA.

Please visit the following websites for examples of local, regional, and state level collaborations:

<http://www.collaboratingpartners.com>

<http://www.wisconsinsig.org/ideaec/ideaecindex.htm>

## Planning for Success

The SIP executive summary is used as a framework for student improvement by providing us with evidence of progress toward meeting our goals. To have meaningful goals means being able to measure to what extent we have been successful. Once we have done this a next logical question is how the information could be used? The DPI uses this information to help in planning programs and initiatives for the coming year. In doing so, here are some of the programs and initiatives planned that will enhance success of our students with disabilities:

- Continuous Improved Focused Monitoring Process: Wisconsin is developing a Continuous Improvement and Focused Monitoring System (CIFMS) that incorporates a focus on positive results for children with disabilities in Wisconsin while ensuring continued procedural compliance with state and federal laws and regulations.
- Wisconsin Statewide Assessment: Regional workshops will continue to be available designed to provide information on statewide testing accommodations for students with disabilities. Participants will be provided skill building activities that facilitate a full understanding of the purpose for accommodations in statewide testing, information on valid testing accommodations, and IEP accommodation decisions.
- Keeping the Promise “High Cost Initiative”: This initiative allocates federal IDEA discretionary funding to help school districts provide educational and related services that exceed \$30,000 for an individual student.
- DPI and the Department of Workforce Development Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): The new MOU between DPI and DVR has been signed and can be accessed at: [http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/PDF\\_files/dpi\\_interagency\\_agreement\\_2004.pdf](http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/PDF_files/dpi_interagency_agreement_2004.pdf). The agreement defines the roles and relationship between DPI and DVR and promotes the use and involvement of DVR counselors as resources for Technical Assistance in IEP process.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- For more information about special education in Wisconsin, please visit the DPI website at: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us>.
- If you would like to obtain a copy of the State Improvement Plan for Children With Disabilities, contact the Special Education Team at the DPI or download a copy from the team website at <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/een/sip.html>.
- You can also visit the Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS) website through the department’s homepage. This electronic resource has been created to help educators, parents, and community members who have an interest in educating the minds and hearts of all children. Sections labeled Standards and Assessment, Data Analysis, Continuous School Improvement, and Best Practices guide users to key local, state, and national information about success in education.



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